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ABSTRACT

Research on the relationship between gender and social influence style suggests that there are both perceived and self-reported differences in the power strategies used by men and women. To thoroughly explore perceived gender differences in power strategy use, modes of influence that have been theoretically derived from, and systematically linked to, the power and gender-social influence literatures were adopted for use in the present study. Data were collected from 87 male and 139 female Rutgers University undergraduates. As subjects entered the research laboratory they were handed a folder containing a cover letter, an index card with a photograph of a male or female college student, and a questionnaire. The cover letter indicated that the study was concerned with first impression accuracy and depicted the photographed individual as a participant in an ongoing personality study at another university. Participants were informed that the researchers would compare their first impression judgments with actual behavioral and personality data from the photographed individual. From the results of the study, it was concluded that the main effect of influence agent sex on perceived strategy use was similar to past findings indicating that men are expected to, and actually report using, interactive and direct social influence styles. The study revealed that while social influence agent sex (the sex of the person photographed), as well as, to a certain extent, influence target sex (the sex of the person reacting to the photograph) both influence perceptions of power strategy use, the agent sex by target sex interaction is critical to one's understanding of perceptions of male-female social influence style differences. Some interesting and informative follow-up research might include looking at additional variables that interact with gender to influence perception of power and social influence styles. (ABL)

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How Do They Get Their Way?
The Perceived Relationship Between Gender and Social Influence Style

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Paper presented at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Boston.

How do they get their way? The perceived relationship between gender and social influence style.

Research on the relationship between gender and social influence style suggests that there are both perceived (e.g., Johnson, 1976) and self-reported (e.g., Falbo & Peplau, 1980) differences in the power strategies used by men and women. In terms of perceived gender differences, for example, Johnson (1976) has demonstrated that females are expected to use indirect, personal and helpless modes of influence while males are expected to employ more direct and concrete influence styles. The available data on the relationship between gender and social influence style do not, however, provide us with a clear understanding of the potentially important role of the influence target in social influence situations. Perception studies have not looked at target sex, and in self-report and laboratory investigations assessing actual social influence strategies, target sex is confounded either with influence agent sex (i.e., only opposite sex dyads are utilized), or with the nature of the relationship (i.e., intimate hetero- and homosexual relationships; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Johnson, 1978; Kipnis, 1976; Raven, Centers, & Rodrigues, 1975). Consequently, we do not know whether power strategies systematically vary as a function of target sex. Furthermore, we know little about how target sex interacts with agent sex when individuals attempt to persuade same- and other-sex people in non-intimate relationships. The goal of the present investigation was to attempt to fill these gaps in the gender-social influence style literature by assessing the independent impacts of influence agent sex and target sex, as well as their interaction, on expected use of different types of power strategies.

Two basic and related domains of literature are often cited to substantiate why differences exist in the styles of social influence used by men and women. These domains will be briefly overviewed before the study itself is described, and it will be demonstrated that these literatures are equally relevant to predicting power strategy differences as a function of target sex as well as influence agent sex.

The first literature domain pertains to sex-role stereotypes. Data from the gender-stereotype literature indicate quite clearly that men and women are expected to be different, especially when it comes to characteristics that are potentially relevant to influence success and style. In a review of

the study of gender stereotypes, Ashmore, Del Boca, and Wohlers (1986) indicate that males are perceived as "impacting," "affecting," and "assertive" "leaders," whereas females are considered "affected," "passive," and "indecisive." In fact, these and other authors such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that the potency dimension is a cultural metaphor for gender, with males being stereotyped as dominant and controlling and females being seen as submissive and controlled.

Given that males are seen as more dominant and less easily influenced than women, it is also reasonable to expect that attempts to influence a male versus female would differ. For example, since women are expected to be more compliant than men, there may be no need to "beat around the bush" when attempting to influence them so straightforward influence strategies might be anticipated. Going beyond stereotypes, there is related laboratory and real-world evidence suggesting that men and women differ as targets of influence as well. More specifically, conformity and compliance studies suggest that women may be more likely than men to conform when observed by others (Becker, 1986; Cooper, 1979; Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Carli, 1981; Eagly & Chrvala, 1986; Eagly & Wood, 1985), and, it has been suggested that many female-dominated job categories, especially in service and caring occupations, require a greater emphasis on acceding to others' wishes than do male-dominated jobs (Eagly, 1987). Consequently, gender-based expectations of how readily male versus female targets comply may cause systematic differences in the types of influence attempts made toward male versus female targets, regardless of influence agent sex.

The second type of literature often cited to support agent gender differences in social influence style pertains to gender roles and the differential amount of actual power possessed by men versus women. Although there have been dramatic increases in the number of women entering prestigious male-dominated fields such as medicine, in our culture men continue to control most of the highest military, scientific, political, and intellectual positions. The differential distribution of men into high-status occupational roles implies that men (versus women) will have greater power to influence others and will exert their influence in different ways. In fact, even in studies in which men and women do have equal amounts of power, such as comparisons of male versus female leaders or managers (e.g., Brown, 1979; Dobbins, 1986), men and women have been found to

differ in their styles of leadership.

Given their relative differences in power, it is also likely that, as targets of influence, males and females will be treated differently be influencers. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that the power or status of the target will interact with agent power to impact expected influence strategy use. Evidence for this assumption comes from a 1985 study by Steckler and Rosenthal. Although these authors did not manipulate target sex, they varied agent sex and target status and discovered that men and women differed substantially in the way they communicated with their bosses, peers, and subordinates. Consequently, it is also probable that male and female influence agents will be expected to use different types of power strategies with male versus female influence targets.

The present investigation was designed to systematically address three questions: (1) Are there main effects of influence agent sex on perceptions of social influence styles? (2) Are there main effects of influence target sex on expected power strategies? (3) Does influence agent sex interact with target sex to impact expected social influence styles? Before describing the study, it is important to discuss what will be the major dependent variables in the investigation -- social influence strategies or styles.

To thoroughly explore perceived gender differences in power strategy use, modes of influence that have been theoretically derived from, and systematically linked to, the power and gender-social influence literatures were adopted for use in the present study. More specifically, Falbo and Peplau's 2-dimensional model of power stragies was used. Falbo & Peplau identified 13 different influence strategies used by men and women in intimate relationships. Table 1 presents these 13 strategies listed alphabetically along with definitions and examples of each type. These strategies were obtained via open-ended responses of 200 participants' answers to the prompt "How I got _____ (their intimate partner) to do what I wanted."

Seven of the 13 categories were derived from classic power and social influence research. That is, useable and relevant categories were selected from French and Raven's (1959) six types of power and from the strategies identified in Falbo's (1977) model of general power strategies. Six additional strategies, grouped by common themes, were also identified. Each of the 13 categories was then rated by experts on the following four properties: direct/indirect, unilateral/bilateral,

active/passive, and good/bad, and these ratings were subjected to multidimensional scaling to identify a model of power strategies. In a two dimensional configuration, the four fitted properties revealed two primary modes of influence: Directness and Interactiveness.

To test for sex differences, the proportion of men versus women reporting each strategy was examined. This data revealed that men are more likely to report using interactive or bilateral and direct styles of influence such as Bargaining and Reasoning, whereas women are more likely to report using unilateral and indirect strategies like Withdrawal. Thus, the 13 strategies to be used in the present study can be classified according to directness and interactiveness, as well as male versus female self-reported prevalence.

Method

Subjects

The data were collected from 87 male and 139 female Rutgers University undergraduates who received partial course credit for their participation.

Procedures and Materials

The procedure was identical to that used by Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972). Participants were run in large mixed-sex groups. As each subject entered the research laboratory, (s)he was handed a folder containing a cover letter, an index card with a photograph of a male or female college student, and a questionnaire. The cover letter indicated that the study was concerned with first impression accuracy and depicted the photographed individual as a participant in an ongoing personality study at another university. Participants were informed that the researchers would compare their "first impression" judgments with actual behavioral and personality data from the photographed individual.

The first three pages of the questionnaire contained 58 9-point rating scales assessing perceptions of the photographed person's personality. The remaining two pages of the questionnaire assessed perceptions of the social influence strategies likely to be used by the pictured individual, or influence agent, when attempting to influence a same versus other-sex acquaintance. Participants were told to consider how the photographed individual would respond in the following hypothetical situation: He/she just discovered that one of the classes (s)he needs to complete in

order to graduate next semester has been filled and the registrar will not allow him/her to enter the class unless (s)he can find someone willing to drop the class. The pictured individual is described as having both a male and a female acquaintance in the class who do not need the class, but are taking it because they want to. Subjects are then asked to indicate how likely it is that the influence agent will do each of 13 behaviors (corresponding to Falbo and Peplau's 13 social influence styles), when trying to convince the male and female acquaintances to drop the class so (s)he can add it. The female and male acquaintance conditions were presented in random order (i.e., for half the participants, the female acquaintance situation was presented first, and for half the male acquaintance situation was first).

Results

A multivariate analysis of variance was performed to address the three major questions of the investigation and follow-up univariate ANOVAs were calculated to allow for more specific interpretation of the data. The MANOVA data are presented in Table 2a and Table 2b contains the univariate ANOVA results.

The first question was, is there a main effect of influence agent sex on perceptions of social influence style? A significant multivariate F was obtained ($F[13,433]=2.98$, $p<.001$) for the main effect of influence agent sex, indicating that, overall, men and women are expected to use different styles of influence. In terms of specific power strategies on which male and female agents are expected to differ, univariate ANOVAs indicated that two of the univariate Fs for influence agent sex were statistically significant: Bargaining ($F[1,450)=4.10$, $p<.05$) and Reasoning ($F[1,450] =7.59$, $p<.01$). Post hoc comparisons revealed that male influence agents were expected to be significantly more likely than female influencers to use both of these strategies.

Regarding the second question, is there a multivariate main effect of influence target sex? The answer here is no, a nonsignificant multivariate F was obtained for the main effect of influence target sex. One univariate F, however, for the Positive Affect power strategy, was clearly statistically significant ($F[1,450]=13.00$, $p<.001$). Follow-up analyses indicated that female targets (regardless of agent sex) are much more likely to have influence agents attempt to sway them through the use of Positive Affect.

The third question was: is there an interaction between influence agent sex and influence target sex on perceptions of social influence style? Here again, the answer is yes. As Table 2a indicates, the multivariate F ($F[13,433]=6.04$, $p<.0001$) suggests that perceptions of male versus female agents' strategies varied significantly as a function of target sex. Four univariate Fs were also signficant: Asking ($F[1,450]=8.48$, $p<.01$), Laissez-faire ($F[1,450]=4.81$, $p<.05$), Negative affect ($F[1,450]=4.88$, $p<.05$) and Positive affect ($F[1,450]=41.85$, $p<.0001$). Post hoc comparisons indicated that influence agents are seen as more likely to use the Asking strategy with same sex peers than with opposite sex peers, with males most likely to simply Ask that other males do something for them. On the other hand, influence agents are expected to use the Laissez-faire, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect influence strategies with opposite sex acquaintances.

Discussion

The main effect of influence agent sex on perceived strategy use is similar to past findings indicating that men are expected to, and actually report using interactive and direct social influence styles. In fact, Bargaining and Reasoning are the most extreme examples of both interactive and direct styles according to Falbo and Peplau's (1980) 2-dimensional model of power strategies. Previous literature may also explain why female targets, regardless of influence agent sex, are expected to be the recipients of Positive Affect influence attempts. As Table 1 indicates, the use of the Positive Affect power strategy refers to smiling and being affectionate. While this seems like a harmless and pleasant enough strategy expected to be used with female targets, it may reflect the lack of power and status, and the expected compliance of women. Why not be nice and pleasant when you already expect her to do what you want? The social influence agent x influence target interaction effects are particularly interesting because they imply that perceived gender differences in social influence styles may be a subtle phenomenon dependent upon the gender composition of the dyad. Although a significant interaction occurred for only four of the influence strategies, the data suggest that agents are more likely to use bilateral and direct strategies with same sex targets, and are expected to use unilateral and indirect influence attempts with opposite-sex targets.

In summary, this investigation revealed that while social influence agent sex, as well as influence target sex (to a certain extent) both influence perceptions of power strategy use, the agent

sex by target sex interaction is critical to our understanding of perceptions of male-female social influence style differences. Some interesting and informative follow-up research might include looking at additional variables that might interact with gender to influence our perception of power and social influence styles, for example physical attractiveness, weight, race, and height. We might also want to see if reality reflects perceptions in terms of the relationship between gender and social influence styles. For example, one might construct a situation where one person has to influence an acquaintance and the interaction could be tape recorded and content analyzed using categories similar to the 13 styles used here.

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Table 1
The 13 Power Strategies Identified by Falbo and Peplau (1980) and Adapted for the Present Investigation

Strategy Label	Definition	Example	Type of Strategy (as rated by Experts)	Self-Reported Gender Prevalence
01. Asking	Agent makes a simple request.	I ask him to do what I want.	Bilateral & Direct	Males
02. Bargaining	Agent does something for target if target will reciprocate.	We negotiate something agreeable to both of us. We compromise.	Bilateral & Direct	Males
03. Laissez-faire	Agent takes independent action; does what he/she wants on own.	We do our own thing. I just do it by myself.	Unilateral & Indirect	Females
04. Negative Affect	Agent expresses negative feelings.	I pout or threaten to cry if I don't get my way.	Unilateral & Indirect	Females
05. Persistence	Agent continues trying to influence.	I repeatedly remind him of what I want until he gives in.	Bilateral & Direct	Males
06. Persuasion	Agent literally reports using "persuasion."	I try to persuade him my way is right.	Bilateral & Direct	Males
07. Positive Affect	Agent expresses positive affect.	I smile a lot. I am especially affectionate.	Bilateral & Indirect	Males/Females
08. Reasoning	Agent uses reason or logical arguments	I reason with her. I argue my point logically.	Bilateral & Direct	Males
09. Stating Importance	Agent tells target how important the request is.	I tell him how important it is to me.	Unilateral & Direct	Females/Males
10. Suggesting	Agent makes suggestions or hints.	I drop hints. I make suggestions	Unilateral & Indirect	Females
11. Talking	Agent literally reports talking or having a discussion with partner.	We talk about it. We discuss our differences and needs.	Bilateral & Direct	Males
12. Telling	Agent makes a direct statement of desired outcome.	I tell her what I want. I state my needs.	Unilateral & Direct	Females/Males
13. Withdrawal	Agent withdraws affection, grows silent, becomes cold and distant.	I clam up. I become silent.	Unilateral & Indirect	Females

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Table 2a
Perceived Social Influence Style as a Function of Agent Sex, Target Sex, and Agent Sex x Target Sex Interaction: MANOVA Results

MANOVA Main Effect of Influence Agent Sex: $F(13,433) = 2.98^{***}$
MANOVA Main Effect of Influence Target Sex: $F(13, 433) = 1.66$ ($p=.07$)
MANOVA Agent Sex x Target Sex Interaction: $F(13,433) = 6.04^{****}$

Table 2b
Perceived Social Influence Style as a Function of Agent Sex, Target Sex, and Agent Sex x Target Sex Interaction: Univariate ANOVA Results

Social Influence Style	Overall Univariate ANOVA for Model each with (3,448) df	Main Effect: Influence Agent Sex	Main Effect: Influence Target Sex	Interaction: Agent Sex x Target Sex
01. Asking	F=3.17*	F=0.18	F=0.84	F=8.48**
02. Bargaining	F=2.23	F=4.10*	F=0.67	F=1.93
03. Laissez-faire	F=2.40	F=1.80	F=0.60	F=4.81*
04. Negative Affect	F=2.94*	F=3.43	F=0.51	F=4.88*
05. Persistence	F=0.60	F=0.81	F=0.01	F=0.99
06. Persuasion	F=0.45	F=1.18	F=0.08	F=0.08
07. Positive Affect	F=19.26****	F=2.93	F=13.00***	F=41.85****
08. Reasoning	F=3.64*	F=7.59**	F=0.44	F=2.91
09. Stating Importance	F=0.80	F=0.74	F=0.03	F=1.64
10. Suggesting	F=0.52	F=0.03	F=0.38	F=1.15
11. Talking	F=1.26	F=0.45	F=1.55	F=1.77
12. Telling	F=0.28	F=0.16	F=0.22	F=0.45
13. Withdrawal	F=1.01	F=2.76	F=0.14	F=0.14

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$
**** $p<.0001$